



**Perth and Kinross Council
Education and Children's Services**

**Extended Learning and Achievement Visit Report
Invergowrie Primary School
14 and 15 June 2016**



BACKGROUND

To support the school in the process of self-evaluation, a team of officers and a headteacher from Education and Children's Services visited Invergowrie Primary School and Nursery Class on 14 and 15 June 2016. The themes for the review were Achievement, Learning and Leadership. These themes were subject to scrutiny through core Quality Indicators from *How good is our school? (3rd edition)* and by using the most recent Education Scotland Advice Note which outlines the raised expectations in relation to all schools' implementation of all aspects of Curriculum for Excellence.

Invergowrie Primary School is led by a Senior Management Team (SMT) of a headteacher and depute headteacher who are both non-class committed. At the time of the visit, the school had a pupil roll of 197 children in 8 primary classes and a nursery class with a total of 46 children across the morning and afternoon sessions. Pupil attendance is in line with the national average.

Information was gathered from visits to the class, scrutiny of data and children's work, discussions with children, parents, all staff and displays of children's work around the school.

ACHIEVEMENT

Children at Invergowrie Primary School are very proud of their school and present as articulate, confident and enthusiastic learners. They report that they feel safe at school and they enjoy a positive and inclusive school ethos.

Attainment data reviewed in the areas of literacy and mathematics indicates that most learners are meeting or exceeding national standards in listening and talking, reading, writing and mathematics. "Active Literacy" approaches are being used consistently in all early years classes and are progressing learning and building confidence in independent reading and writing activities. This builds on the strong practice observed in the Nursery, where high quality staff:child interactions support children's acquisition of vocabulary and their skills in listening and talking. Throughout the school the development of reading for enjoyment and understanding is well established. Children benefit from the progressive development of reading strategies. The impact of a "reading culture" is reflected in children's extended pieces of writing which are well presented and engaging to read.

A new system for teachers to monitor and track individual pupil attainment over time in listening, talking, reading, writing and mathematics has been introduced this

session. This is proving to be a very useful tool for analysis of pupil progress against predicted targets of attainment. It is the focus for teacher/SMT termly discussions on children's attainment in literacy and numeracy and is improving processes for targeting support to those children who require interventions to progress their learning. The development of the use of this system will continue next session. It should be extended to involve support staff and to capture learners' progress in other curriculum areas and their wider achievements.

Children are encouraged to talk about achievements gained from clubs and activities and have opportunities to share these at assemblies. There is a good variety of school clubs for children of all ages which are well attended. They are led by staff, parents, volunteers and senior children. The children report that they enjoy this opportunity for additional leadership and responsibility. Pupils in senior classes are all involved in the Junior Award Scheme for Schools (JASS) accredited programme which promotes achievement through the setting of personal goals. This supports independent working and a greater awareness of target setting.

Opportunities for learning across classes have been developed this session. A well-established Committee System, involving primary pupils from a mix of classes, focuses on key themes such as Eco Awareness, Global Citizenship, ICT, Enterprise and Healthy Lifestyles. Not only is this system giving opportunities for the application of skills being learnt in class but is also a contributing factor to the strong sense of community that the school has. Such opportunities should be evaluated regularly to ensure that children are clear about how they are extending their curricular learning when participating in Committee work.

Parents consulted expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school. They appreciate the genuine interest and care that all staff have for their children and commented favourably on the school's responsiveness when issues have been raised. Children stated that they feel safe in school, that they are listened to and that they trust staff to look after them. Personal and social development opportunities are planned for throughout the school, for example, learning about the wellbeing indicators and the use of Restorative Approaches. The school plans to further develop knowledge, understanding and reflection on the wellbeing indicators next session.

LEARNING

Invergowrie Primary School moved into new premises in October 2013. The school building is spacious, bright and well designed. The external environment is extensive and is being developed to reflect the increasing focus on outdoor learning, which has been an improvement priority this session.

In almost all lessons observed, explanations and instructions were clear and they built upon previous learning and real life experiences. The learning was well planned and children's motivation and attention were sustained due to high quality verbal feedback and well-earned praise. In most lessons the Learning Intentions were made clear and effective questioning by staff allowed the children to think, build their curiosity and express their own opinions and ask questions. In the best lessons observed there was clear differentiation, support and challenge for all learners who were encouraged to self and peer assess against agreed success criteria. For

example children were learning to use timetables for planning journeys. There was clear understanding of the task and a balance of independent and teacher led learning which took account of varying learning needs. The plenary session evidenced children's skills in identifying new learning and levels of progression.

Staff have identified that learning and teaching approaches in numeracy and mathematics should be reviewed and developed next session. There is an overreliance on commercial materials for both progression in learning and pupil activities. There are too few opportunities for the application of mathematical knowledge and skills within real life, motivating and engaging contexts. Examples of effective practice in this area were observed where children were fully engaged in a blend of indoor and outdoor learning activities, working out calculations on time, speed and distance from their 10 and 100 metre sprints. In the nursery, staff used a range of teaching approaches and skilful questioning to develop the children's thinking in maths. The school should build on the early developments being made in this area to ensure effective practice in the teaching of numeracy and mathematics throughout the school.

Almost all children at Invergowrie Primary School are eager to learn. They are attentive, well behaved and can confidently work independently and co-operatively. Children from P4 – P7 reported that they enjoy working in vertical groups on the whole school context of "Olympics". They were clear about the leadership skills they were developing within this relevant and engaging context. They talked confidently about their learning however were less clear about their personal targets. Currently all children are using a digital programme for building their learning profile. The quality and frequency of use, and therefore, impact of this is variable. This tool should be the starting point for developing a pupil profile which reflects progress against key aspects of learning and personal target setting.

Almost all teaching staff have engaged in the Tapestry Programme which provides professional development sessions for teachers related to the effective use of formative assessment strategies. This has had an impact on the quality of teachers' questions to children, which were observed as being of good quality throughout the school, and in children engaging with activities to self and peer assess. It is important that this focus on formative assessment continues next session. Written feedback on children's work must relate to the intended learning of the task as well as progress on personal targets.

The headteacher works with teaching and support staff to identify, plan for and review children with identified learning needs. Support staff work with specific individuals or groups of children and discuss with the teachers the support they can give. The school plans to continue developing practice in this area by involving support staff in the termly attainment meetings.

The rationale and design of the curriculum has been recently reviewed and agreed by staff. It articulates the importance of active learning through curricular areas, contexts, opportunities for personal achievement: all within the life and work of the school. The learners benefit from working with children and staff from all classes and are particularly enthusiastic about outdoor learning. At the time of the visit the whole school were engaged in an "Olympics" theme with specific rich and relevant tasks focusing on the organisation and celebration of an "Olympic" style sports' day.

Such curriculum innovations should continue to be developed across the whole school to ensure that the learning experiences for all children are relevant, challenging, engaging and differentiated.

LEADERSHIP

Parents consulted find the headteacher to be approachable, proactive and they hold her in high regard. They recognise that she is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and that together they are a strong management team who have a clear focus on school improvement and on learning and teaching. Recent work on creating the vision, values and aims of the school has engaged all stakeholders and has been a welcomed development. Parents also value the work of the staff team and feel that all staff are fully committed to meeting the needs of their children.

All staff in the school have leadership roles, which bring about improvements for learners. For example, the Erasmus+ project (European programme for education) has given almost all nursery and primary staff the opportunity to experience learning and teaching nationally and internationally, increasing their professional knowledge and understanding and enabling them to develop new approaches in their practice. The development of the skills programme in P4 – P7 has focused on skills for learning, life and work and the on-going Eco work links well with recent developments in outdoor learning.

Senior pupils have many opportunities to lead and are developing their knowledge and understanding of effective leadership. Such opportunities are less obvious in the early years. Nursery children take a strong lead in their learning which allows staff to follow children's interests and provide relevance and depth in learning. There is now scope to extend the skills development work through the school to ensure that there is a progressive skills programme from nursery to P7.

Invergowrie staff are committed to self-reflection and professional development. There is strong team work and a collective desire to secure best outcomes for all learners. Staff training opportunities, joint planning approaches and observing each other whilst teaching are increasing teachers' professional knowledge and expertise.

Self-evaluation and quality assurance approaches provide accurate information to inform school improvement planning. Developments taken forward through this process are having a measurable impact on learning, teaching and children's attainment. The Pupil Council should now develop its role to include evaluating both the work of the school and the impact of the School Improvement Plan on pupils' learning.

Conclusion

Invergowrie Primary School has a staff, parent and pupil group who have pride and ambition for their school. Communication is good and there is a collective desire to work together to meet the needs of the "whole child". All children are making good progress in their learning and development towards their predicted levels of attainment. They display many of the attributes of being successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

Key Strengths

- articulate, confident and motivated children who are highly engaged in their learning and who work well both in co-operative learning groups and independently
- led by the headteacher, the teamwork of all staff and their commitment to collegiate working, professional development and leadership opportunities
- the high quality child:staff interactions in the nursery to support children's vocabulary acquisition and the nurturing approach taken by the nursery staff to support emotional well-being and self esteem
- quality of pupils' extended pieces of writing throughout the school and the pupils' ability to articulate their thoughts and ideas to staff and to each other

Areas for Improvement

- during session 2016-17 continue to develop the curriculum so that it reflects the principles of curriculum design and the vision, values and aims of the school
- by December 2016 agree and implement a whole school profiling process that captures the learning journey of each child
- develop approaches to the learning and teaching of numeracy and mathematics next session ensuring that by June 2017 there is consistency in practice and clear guidance

The headteacher, staff, pupils and parents should continue to work together to support future improvements in order to enable all children to develop and achieve their full potential. Education Officers of Perth & Kinross Council will work with the school in taking forward the improvement agenda. A follow up visit will take place in June 2017.

[HMI Report 2009](#)

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